II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. Methodology

Research for the project area history was conducted at the following locations: deeds and wills were consulted at the Alexandria Courthouse; tax records, District of Columbia and Virginia census records, the Alexandria Gazette, historic maps, church records and secondary sources were consulted at the Lloyd House Library in Alexandria, the National Archives and the Fairfax City Library; additional historic maps were consulted at the Geography and Maps Division of the Library of Congress; information on previous archaeological investigations and additional tax records were provided by Dr. Pamela Cressey at Alexandria Archaeology; and the Minute Books of the First Baptist Church were provided by Mr. Wilson Gaines, historian of the First Baptist Church. The records belonging to the Alfred Street Baptist Church were unavailable for consultation.

B. Local Background

1. Free African-Americans in Northern Virginia and the District of Columbia Prior to the Civil War

Free African-Americans became a more visible social group in northern Virginia in the decades following the Revolutionary War. At this time, slaves were being freed in greater numbers because of the declining profits of the large tobacco plantations. These plantations were replaced by small, agriculturally diverse farms where large numbers of slaves were unnecessary and could not be supported. In addition, some slaves were freed because the ideals of equality and freedom voiced during the Revolutionary War caused some slaveowners to question the morality of slavery. Abolition societies and religious groups, such as the Quakers and Methodists, began to encourage the education of African-Americans, both free and slave (Artemel 1978:211; Chittenden et al. 1988).

Many of the free African-Americans migrated from rural areas to urban centers, such as Alexandria and Georgetown, where greater work opportunities were available. The inclusion of these towns into the District of Columbia in 1791 and the development of the new city of Washington, made economic growth of the region inevitable. In Alexandria (part of the District of Columbia from 1791 to 1846), for example, the free African-American population increased substantially near the turn of the 19th-century. In 1790, the city's total population was 2,748, of which 2,153 were white, 543 were slaves and only 52 were free. By 1810, Alexandria's total population was 7,227, of which 4,903 were white, 1,488 slave and 836 were free African-Americans (Artemel 1978:155). Table 1 shows the population in Alexandria, Washington City, Georgetown, Washington County, and Fairfax County.

As the number of free African-Americans increased, state and local laws were passed in an attempt to regulate the growth and movement of this population. One of the first laws passed by the Virginia legislature in 1793 required free African-Americans to register in their county or city of residence. A more restrictive law passed in 1806 required free African-Americans to leave Virginia within a year of being freed. Later amendments to this law (1817 and 1837) enabled African-Americans to remain in the area with the court's permission (Artemel 1978:211). The

Table 1: Population of Alexandria, Fairfax County and the District of Columbia 1800-1840*

	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840
ALEXANDRIA					
Total	4,971	7,227	8,345	8,241	8,459
White	3,727	4,903	5,742	5,609	5,758
Free	369	836	1,168	1,371	1,627
Slave	875	1,488	1,435	1,261	1,064
WASHINGTON CITY					
Total	3,210	8,208	13,117	18,826	23,364
White	2,464	5,904	9,376	13,367	16,843
Free	123	867	1,796	3,129	4,808
Slave	623	1,437	1,945	2,330	1,713
GEORGETOWN					
Total	2,993	4,948	7,360	8,441	7,312
White	3,394	3,235	5,099	6,122	5,124
Free	277	551	894	1,204	1,403
Slave	1,449	1,162	1,521	1,115	785
WASHINGTON CO.					
Total	1,941	2,135	2,729	2,994	3,069
White	--	--	1,514	1,828	1,929
Free	--	--	168	167	288
Slave	--	--	1,047	999	812
FAIRFAX CO.					
Total	--	13,654	11,322	9,206	9,338
White	--	6,626	6,149	4,893	5,439
Free	--	543	740	311	448
Slave	--	6,845	4,433	4,002	3,451

*Adapted from Green 1967, Artemel 1978.

Common Council of Alexandria also passed a bill in 1806 to "prevent migration of free negroes and mulattoes, into the corporation of Alexandria and to prescribe the mode of registering the same and to enforce the payment of their capitation tax" (*Alexandria Gazette* 1896). Sweig shows that these laws were not very strictly enforced, because the free African-American population continued to grow and many did not register (Sweig 1983:5).

Free African-Americans, however, were subject to many other restrictions which were enforced with fines or other punishments. In Washington, for example, African-Americans found in the streets after ten o'clock, or attending disorderly meetings or at "tippling houses" or found to be playing games like cards were subject to expensive fines and even whippings (Green 1976:18). In Washington and Virginia, all free African-Americans were required to carry manumission papers. Newcomers, in particular, could be suspected of being runaway slaves. Local court records provide many examples of circumstances in which African-American men and women who claimed to be free, were jailed for not being able to produce current papers, or a white citizen to support their statement and testify to their good character. In such instances, prison fees accrued substantially and a prisoner who could not meet the payment was "hired out", usually for one year (Artemel 1978:213). In even worse cases, a free man could be sold back into slavery. This risk increased by 1812 when the District of Columbia and Alexandria became major slave trading centers for the cotton plantations in the Carolinas and Georgia (Artemel et al. 1987; Green 1976:19).

The Nat Turner rebellion in Southampton, Virginia in August 1831 increased fears among the white population about free African-Americans. Turner was a Baptist exhorter who "claimed that the spirit of the Old Testament prophets had called on him to deliver his people." He subsequently led a revolt which resulted in the death of sixty whites. Turner and 200 other African-Americans participants were executed (Smith 1988:88). Additional laws (for example, curfews and restriction on group meetings) were created and more regularly enforced by white communities throughout the south. In 1837, a Virginia statute singled out both African-American preachers and educators for special restriction, no doubt in an attempt to forestall any type of conspiracy similar to the Turner revolt.

In an attempt to quell white fears, 43 members of the free African-American community in Alexandria published a statement, in the Alexandria Gazette a month after the Turner revolt, which expressed their loyalty to the city and interest in preventing a similar conspiracy (Cressey 1985:59). It is also interesting to note that when Alexandria County was ceded back to Virginia in 1846, 763 free African-Americans registered. This number is much greater than the 52 who had registered in the county in 1831 (Sweig 1983:5).

Despite the many restrictions placed on the free African-Americans, the early 19th-century was a period during which this population began to develop self-sufficient communities, with independent churches, relief organizations and educational facilities. In Alexandria, three neighborhoods with primarily African-American residents developed outside of the "core" area by 1810. These neighborhoods were known as "The Bottoms," "Hayti" and "The Berg" (Cressey 1985:74). The Alfred Street Baptist Church was located in one of these neighborhoods, later known as "The Bottoms." Property on Alfred Street had been leased to a free African-American tenant as early as 1798. These neighborhoods and others grew and persisted into the 20th-century.

Free African-Americans supported themselves by performing low paying work. It is likely that "most of the men earned their living as day laborers or carters, and the women as laundresses, seamstresses, and cooks" (Green 1976:16). Some free men were able to find more skilled work as carpenters, cobblers, tanners, and bricklayers, for example (Artemel 1978:217). However, when the economy became depressed they had to compete with European immigrants for these positions.

The Church and relief organizations were the only institutions of which free African-Americans and slaves were allowed to be members. The free African-American churches and organizations like the Mutual Relief and Friendly Society (established in 1824) in Alexandria were important in creating a self-sufficient community. The relief society in Alexandria, like similar organizations in Washington, helped finance burials, support widows, and provide health benefits for its members (Mutual Relief and Friendly Society 1824). These organizations also helped educate free African-Americans despite legislation against it. It is also likely that the local African-American churches and relief organizations provided assistance, whenever possible, in paying fines and fees of members who had been unjustly jailed (Artemel et al. 1987).

2. The Baptist Movement in Northern Virginia

The Baptist movement in Northern Virginia has been traced to the evangelistic efforts of Edmund Hayes and Thomas Yates, who were members of Sater's Baptist Church of Maryland as early as 1743. The first Baptist Church in Virginia was established at Burleigh, Isle of Wight County, in 1714. By 1774 there were 54 Baptist churches in the colony (Steadman 1964:110).

One of the first persons associated with the Baptist movement in Northern Virginia was Jeremiah Moore of Fairfax County (Steadman 1964:110). In 1772, Moore professed the Baptist covenant, and was baptized by the Reverend David Thomas of the Broad Run Baptist Church at New Baltimore in Fauquier County, Virginia. Soon after, he began to preach and was successful in Fairfax County. Moore felt that a man had the God-given right to preach the Gospel and refused to follow a Virginia law which required a license to preach. He was arrested while preaching near Colvin's Mill on Difficult Run in Fairfax County and was imprisoned in Alexandria, where he continued to preach from the window of the prison. Through Jeremiah Moore's efforts, Back Lick Baptist Church was established in upper Fairfax County and from this church came the charter members of the First Baptist Church of Alexandria (Steadman 1964:110).

3. The Growth of African-American Churches in the South

One result of the Great Awakening in the American colonies during the mid-18th century was the conversion of many African-Americans to Christianity. This religious revival stressed the importance of saving all men regardless of race and also emphasized the conversion experience in the heart rather than spiritual growth through study and discipline (Smith 1988:29). The Baptists and Methodists were very successful in gaining converts for a number of reasons. First, at least during the late 18th-century, there was some anti-slavery sentiment among church members, particularly after the Revolutionary War. Second, the church organizational structure was flexible and particularly efficient in sparsely settled areas. Third, and perhaps most important, "both groups

deemphasized an educated clergy, and therefore, many African-Americans were able to preach among them" (Smith 1988:30).

The first African-American churches to emerge in the South were among African-Americans converted by Separatist (or New Light) Baptists. This religious group "stressed the independence of each congregation [and] blacks seized this principle and created congregations of their own" (Smith 1988:31). The earliest churches in the South evolved from plantation congregations at Lunenburg, Virginia in 1756, Silver Bluff, South Carolina in 1773 and Williamsburg, Virginia in 1776 (Smith 1988:33).

African-American preachers, Baptist and Methodist, were not uncommon in Virginia during the closing decades of the 18th-century. Contemporary accounts by white clergymen record many instances of African-American preachers. The itinerant white Baptist clergyman, Richard Dozier, for example, favorably described sermons delivered by different African-American preachers to crowds as large as 400 during the 1780s, in Virginia and on the eastern shore. The African-American Baptist Church in Williamsburg also prospered under the leadership of two African-American preachers, one was named Moses and the other Gowan Pamphlet (Smith 1983:63). The first African-American Methodist preacher was Harry Hoosier (also known as "Black Harry") whose first recorded sermon was preached at Fairfax Chapel in 1781 and described by Bishop Asbury. The Bishop wrote that Harry spoke about the "the barren fig-tree" and because the "circumstance was new, the white people looked on with attention" (Artemel 1978).

By the early 19th-century, there were several independent African-American Baptist and Methodist churches in Georgetown, Washington and Alexandria. In 1816, the Mount Zion Methodist Church was organized from the Montgomery Street Church in Georgetown. The Israel Bethel Church was organized by African-American members who withdrew from the Ebenezer Methodist Church in 1820. This church was located near the foot of Capital Hill. The Nineteenth Street Baptist Church (known historically as the First Colored Baptist Church) was established by the congregation of the First Baptist Church of Washington in 1833 (Smith 1988:80-84). In Alexandria, the Alfred Street Baptist Church (known historically as the African Baptist or Colored Baptist Church) was established by African-American members of the First Baptist Church of Alexandria in 1803. In 1832, the African-American Methodists in Alexandria established Davis Chapel, the forerunner of the Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church.

Even though there were African-American churches, some free African-Americans and slaves continued to worship with white congregations. For example, St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Alexandria included numerous members of the free African-Americans and slaves in its congregation. The Reverend James T. Jackson, rector of St. Paul's from 1830 to 1859, baptized over a hundred African-American people and officiated at marriages of a number of slaves, even though the latter was not recognized as legal within Virginia (Hickin 1978:288 citing Hall n.d.).

The African-American church was the first institution which African-Americans were able to control and this was a significant advancement in the African-American struggle for independence. It became the "center of the Negro social as well as religious life," and further "colored people without any church affiliation had little standing in the Negro community" (Green

1976:40). The church also encouraged the development of the community by being its social, educational and economic center.

4. The Establishment of the Alfred Street Baptist Church

When the First Baptist Church was established in Alexandria in 1803, both free African-Americans and slaves joined. While some of this number were new converts, there were also many who had been members of other Baptist churches. Secondary sources date the establishment of the Colored Baptist Society to 1803 also and further state that the free African-American Baptists held religious meetings in their homes. While no documentary evidence has been found to support this contention, it is quite likely that free African-Americans did begin meeting on their own, particularly if some among them were preachers. There are several references made to African-American preachers in the First Baptist Church minutes. The earliest reference, made in 1810, notes a African-American man, named Charles, who is excluded from the fellowship for "public speaking" without a license from the church. In April 1814, Jesse Henderson (the trustee listed on the 1818 indenture), was granted the right to preach because he had been doing so at the Buck Marsh church from where he brought a letter of "dismissal" (recommendation) (First Baptist Church Minute Books).

Another factor which may have pushed the African-American members to meet on their own was that beginning in February 1811, the seating in the church was segregated with the African-American members "confined to that part of the meeting house below the North door." Ironically, even when the church members granted Jesse Henderson the "liberty to speake publickly", it was specified that he do so only when the meeting house was "not occupied by some white preacher" and that "in the meantime the people of collour occupy the gallery only as usual" (First Baptist Church Minute Books).

When the trustees leased the lot on Alfred Street for the Colored Baptist Society in 1818, the council of the First Baptist Church established articles which "officially" granted the society the opportunity to meet and discuss on their own, though they were still considered as part of one church. The first article limited worship at the African-American meeting house to "the afternoon of every Lords day" and any other evening which would not interfere with the meetings held at the First Baptist Church. The second and third articles allowed the African-American congregation to relate religious experiences as well as evidence of improper behavior by African-American members among themselves. The final decision regarding any matter, however, ultimately rested with the white council. The two articles were as follows:

> 2nd. On every Wednesday evening immediately preceding the regular church meeting, they are authorized to meet for the purpose of hearing relations of experiences from people of color, who wish to offer themselves as candidates to the church.
>
> 3rd. All cases of complaint produced against disorderly colored members are to be brought forward, heard and investigated in due order at the aforesaid meeting; and the result of their proceedings to be regularly reported to the church at its

> immediately ensuing meeting that they may finally decide the business (First Baptist Church Minute Books).

The construction of the Baptist Church in this already established neighborhood supports the observation made by Curry (1981), that it was not the church which fostered community development at the beginning but that the African-Americans perceived the existence of their community and then, using locally based resources, established churches to further the needs and development of their community (in Blomberg 1988:75).

On June 28, 1830, a committee was formed in order to organize a separate and independent "Colored Baptist" Church. One motion resolved that Brothers Cawood and Rogers together with the Pastor of the Church, be a Committee, with discretionary powers, fully to organize, the Coloured Members of this Body into a Separate Church, in the Town of Alexandria. The Clerk was directed to grant, the Colored Members of this church, a letter of Dismission to Unite in a Separate Body in this Town, under the name of "The Colored Baptist Church of Alexandria" (First Baptist Church Minute Book 1830).

Finally, one month later, on July 26, 1830, the appointed committee reported it had discharged its duties:

> in fully organizing them into a separate and independent church in this Town, to be known by the name of the First Colored Baptist Church of Alexandria, that they had adopted our Constitution, and pretty much the same Rules of Discipline and Church Government, with the exception of one Rule, which gives this Church authority in the final adjustment and settlement of difficulties, where they cannot agree amongst themselves (First Baptist Church Minute Book 1830).

Although, the African-American Baptist congregation was subject to restrictions, they succeeded in establishing their own society, constructing their own meeting house and ultimately becoming the First Colored Baptist Church of Alexandria which was recognized as "an independent church with its own Constitution" (First Baptist Church Minute Books).

In addition to its spiritual function, the Alfred Street Baptist Church also assisted in the education of the African-American community in Alexandria by operating a Sunday school from as early as the 1820s (African-American Institute 1978). Secondary sources also state that a more formal school was organized at the Church in 1833 by a teacher from Washington named Mr. Nuthall. This school lasted for only three years because of white fear and opposition following the Nat Turner Rebellion. Despite this setback, the Sunday school remained open even though legislation passed in Virginia in 1830 and 1839 prevented African-Americans from receiving any formal education (Blomberg 1988:77; African-American Institute 1978). During the early 20th-century, the church's minister, Reverend Andrew Adkins founded the first African-American high school in Alexandria.

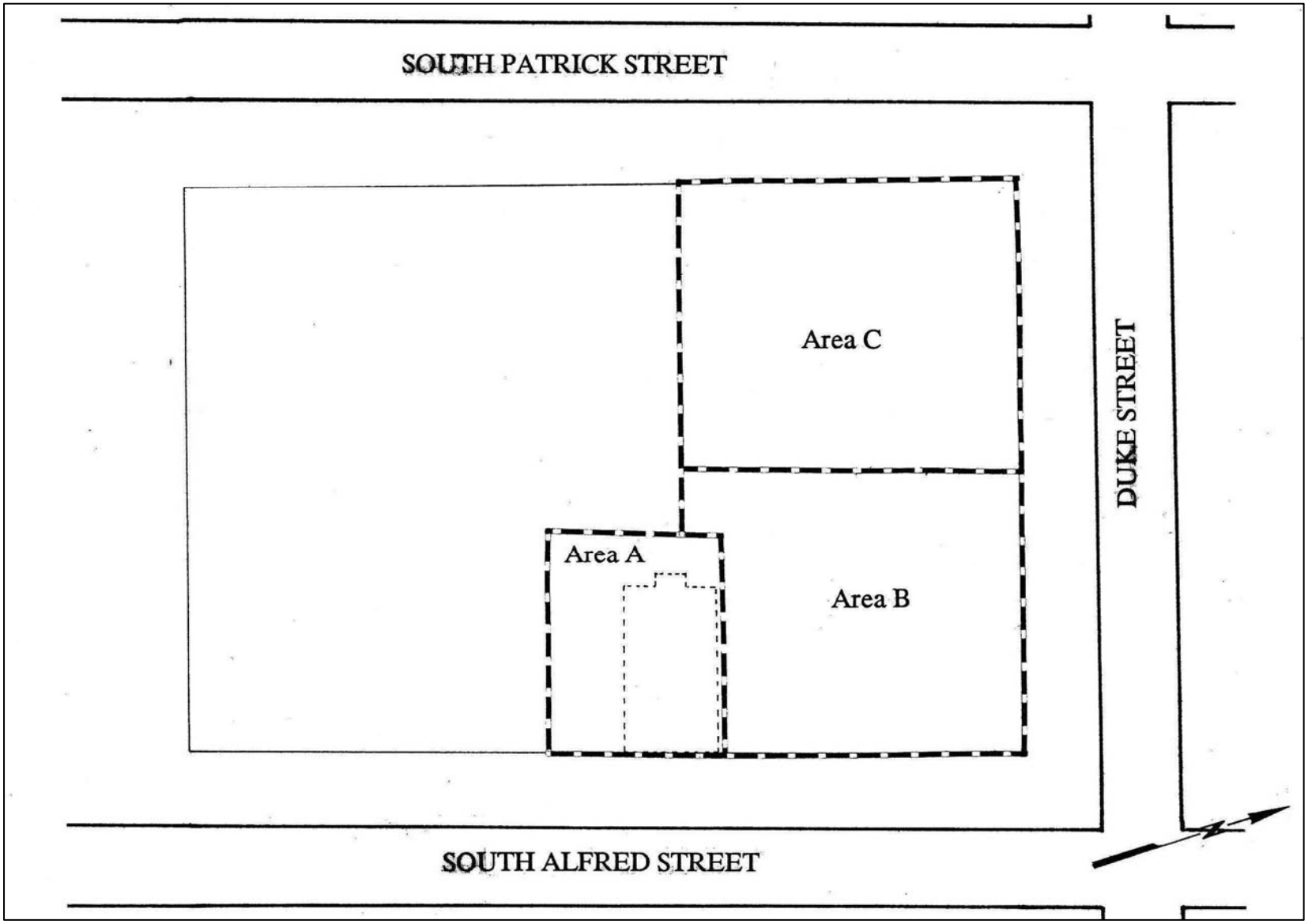
C. Project Area History

The project area was originally part of a 700-acre patent granted to Margaret Brent on November 20, 1662 (Patent Book 5:240 in Mitchell 1977:35). The patent passed to her brother, Giles Brent, who then sold it to John Fitzherbert. He, in turn, sold it to John Alexander in 1674 (Mitchell 1977:35). Six hundred acres of this patent remained in the Alexander family. Alexander made his will in October 1677 and devised the approximately 6000 acres of land he possessed to his two sons, Robert and Philip. Alexander's land included a portion of the land he had purchased from Fitzherbert and part of a 6000-acre tract he had purchased from Robert Howsing in 1669 (Mitchell 1977:60). When Alexander died, his son, Robert Alexander, inherited all his property because his will was unsigned. However, Robert conveyed half-interest in the property to his brother Philip in 1690. Three years later, Philip reconveyed to Robert this half-interest, except for 500 acres that he reserved for himself. These 500 acres passed to Philip's son, Philip Alexander, and after his death in 1753 to his son, John Alexander. Part of this acreage was taken for the site of Alexandria (Mitchell 1977:61). In May 1775, John Alexander willed his property to his son, William Thorton Alexander. Thus, the block upon which the project area is located came into his possession.

On September 14, 1795, William T. Alexander granted (in separate deeds) equal portions of this block to James Lawrason and Benjamin Shreve for an annual rent. Lawrason and his wife, Lucy, received the eastern half of the block (divided along a north-south line) and Benjamin Shreve the western half (Hustings Court Deed Book G:349; G:362). Each half was made up of two half-acre lots, and each man was responsible for paying Alexander 20 pounds on September 13th every year thereafter (Appendix A).

James Lawrason was a wealthy Alexandria shipping merchant who owned a wharf and lived on St. Asaph Street. His wife Alice was among the charter members of the First Baptist Church of Alexandria. The Lawrasons did not live on their portion of the block at Duke and Alfred, but by as early as 1799 had begun renting 25 x 110 foot lots on the southeastern corner of the block (fronting on Alfred Street) (Alexandria Deed Book L:99). Tax assessments show that the lessees of these lots were free African-Americans. Virtually all the lots on the 300 block of Alfred Street had been leased by the Lawrasons to free African-American tenants by 1806. They had leased the first lot on the block to William Goddard in 1798 (Hustings Court, Alexandria County Book K-2:634). Additional lessees were Pompey Porrer and Henry Johnston in 1802; Archaleus Richards in 1803, Sampson Sunby in 1804 and John Colbert in 1805. This streetface was the earliest section of the enduring African-American neighborhood known as "The Bottoms" (Cressey 1985:74).

To more clearly discuss the history of the project area from this date, it has been divided into three study areas: A, B, and C. Study Area A will focus on the original church lot on South Alfred Street. Study Area B will discuss the northeastern portion of the block and Area C the northwestern portion (Figure 2).



Alfred Street
Baptist Church

Figure 2.
Study Area A, B, and C

1. The Original Church Lot or Study Area A

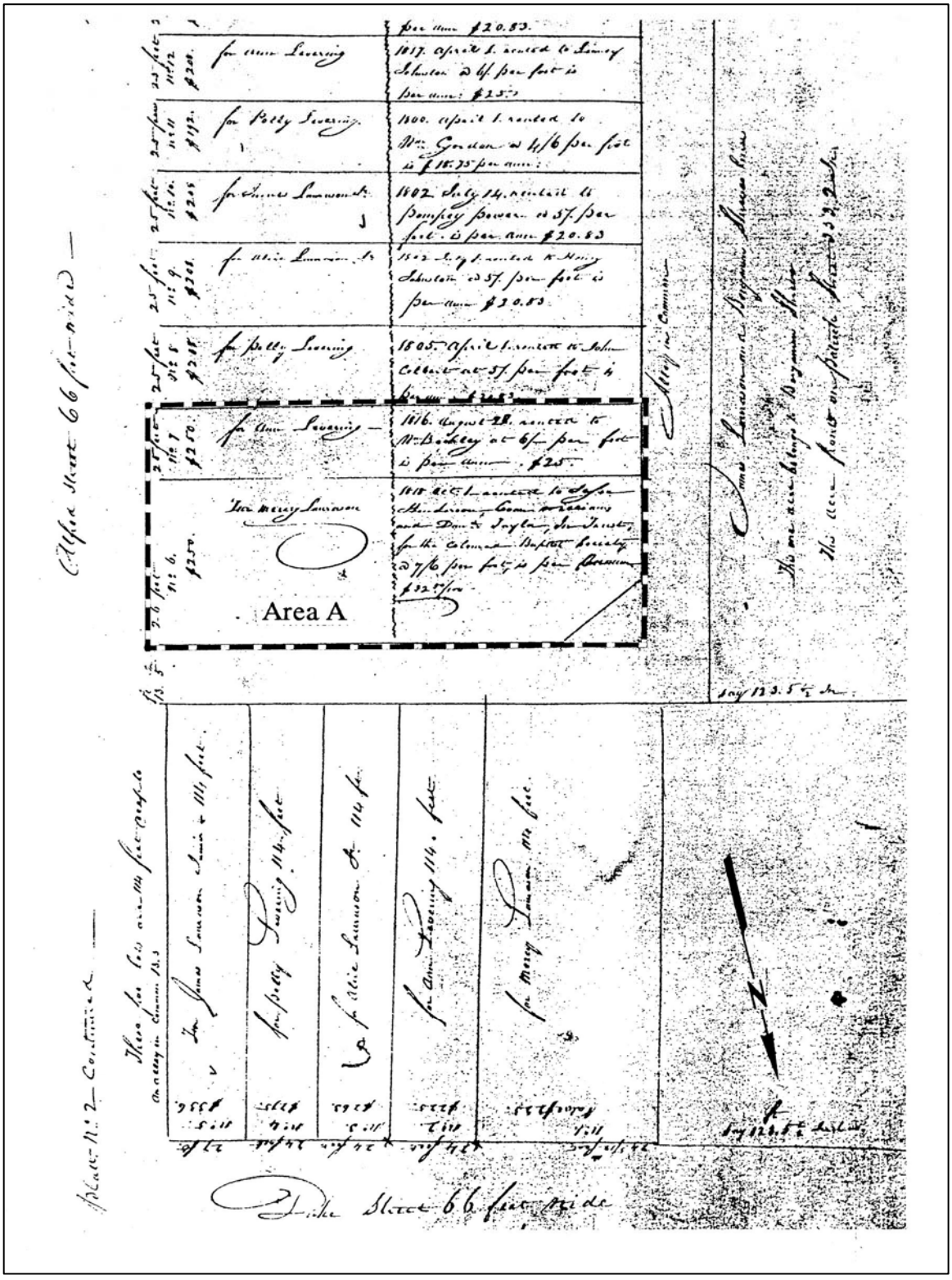
On November 1, 1818, Lawrason and his wife, Alice, granted a 26 x 110 foot lot (Study Area A) on Alfred Street to Jesse Henderson, Evan Williams and Daniel Taylor, trustees for the Colored Baptist Society of the town of Alexandria, for an annual rent of $32.50. The indenture further states that the lot was "to be managed, governed, disposed of used and conveyed for such purposes and in such a manner only as the society shall from time to time order and appoint." The lot was located 201 feet north of Wolfe Street, and was bounded on the north and west by an alley and its frontage on Alfred was 26 feet (Alexandria Deed Book H-2:327). At this time, there were homes on virtually every lot on the street face (Alexandria Land Books and Personal Property Tax Assessments). The lot remained the property of the Lawrason heirs until 1842. When James Lawrason died in 1824, his will written in October 23, 1820 was probated. This will included a plat of the eastern half of the project area block which shows the lots and gives the name of each renter, the annual rent and the inheritor of the property (Figure 3). The lot rented by the Colored Baptist Society was devised to Lawrason's daughter, Mercy Ann (Alexandria Will Books, Orphans Court 3:133).

The trustees for the Colored Baptist Society were free African-Americans who were also members of the First Baptist Church of Alexandria.

Jesse Henderson and his wife, Rachel, were received by the church on April 23, 1814 after presenting a letter of dismission from the Buck Marsh Church. According to the 1820 Census, Henderson's household was composed of a man and a woman over 45 years of age, one of whom was engaged in agriculture (District of Columbia Census Records 1820). The First Baptist Church membership list shows that Henderson died on April 14, 1823 and that his wife, Rachel, died in 1825 (First Baptist Church Minute Book Volume 2, 1816-1834).

In August 1817, Evan Williams, was received by a letter of dismission from a "sister church." In 1820, Evan Williams' household consisted of three males and a female. Of the males, one was less than 14, another was between 16 and 26 and the last was between 26 and 45. The only woman was between the ages of 26 and 45. One member of the household was engaged in agriculture and another in manufacture (District of Columbia Census Records 1820). The First Baptist Church records show that Williams had a shop (First Baptist Church Minute Books, Vol. 1).

Daniel Taylor was a member of the First Baptist Church by June 1820. At this time, he was granted the "liberty to exercise his gift in exhortation within the bounds of this church, whenever God is pleased to grant an opportunity" (First Baptist Church Minute Books, Vol. 1). A Daniel Taylor registered as a free man in Alexandria County in September 1821. This record shows that he was manumitted by Nancy Cole, who purchased him from William Weemes. He was described as being 43 years old on 22 November 1820, standing 5 feet 7 3/4 inches and having lost the first joint of his thumb on the right hand. Other notations in the register show that Nancy Cole was a African-American woman who had been born free (Provine 1990). The 1820 Census for Taylor's household included five males and four females. Two of the males were less than 14, two were



Alfred Street Baptist Church

Figure 3. Plat of James Laurason's Property, 1820

between 14 and 26 and one was between 26 and 45. One of the females was less than 14, two were between 14 and 26 and one was over 45. One member of the household was engaged in agriculture (District of Columbia Census Records 1820). The membership list shows that Taylor died on July 1, 1829 (First Baptist Church Minute Books, Vol. 2).

The Minute Books from the First Baptist Church provide important information regarding the establishment of the Colored Baptist Society and the construction of the meeting house. On December 4, 1818, the following notation appears in the church records:

> It is proposed and agreed to, that the collections taken up weekly from the people of color be (so long as the church shall deem it expedient) appropriated to the purpose of assisting in paying the debt incurred by the Color'd Brethren in meeting a place of worship. At the request of the Color'd members, a committee was appointed to arrange a plan for their conduct relative to the church conjointly and their distinct meetings separately.

This may refer to the debt incurred by the trustees in acquiring the property from the Lawrasons. A month later, on January 1, 1819, it was made clear that although the "Colored Brethren" held separate meetings they were all still part of one church, "the white and colored Brethren of the Town of Alexandria, denominated Baptists, constitute but one church."

The record also states that "our Colored Brethren have just erected a Brick house for public worship". This construction date conflicts with information found in the City of Alexandria tax assessments. Although the location of the "Brick house" was not recorded, it would seem likely that it was located on the property purchased on Alfred Street. The first tax record for the lot on Alfred Street appears in 1820. At this time, Daniel Taylor is listed as the "proprietor" of the lot which is described as being vacant and valued at $100 (Alexandria Land Books and Personal Property Tax Assessments). No further record of this lot appears in the tax assessments until 1836, when the "Baptist Colored Society Meeting House" is listed with a note explaining that an annual ground rent of $31.50 due on November 1 to Romulus Riggs (Mercy Ann's husband). Further evidence that the meeting house had been erected prior to 1836, comes from the minutes recorded on July 3, 1823 which read as follows, "Liberty was granted to the Col'd Brethren to open their meeting house for public worship on the afternoon of each Lords Day - and on such evenings through the week as shall not interfere with publick worship at this house." Also, in October 1832, "Brethren Bryan, Grimes, Simpson, and Cornelius were appointed to make some inquiry into the situation of the Col'd peoples meeting house and the propriety of buying the ground on which it stands, in order for them to hold it free of incumberance". Thus the Colored Baptist Church was recognized as its own entity. Secondary sources state that the church continued to have a white minister until 1863. It is evident, however, that there were also African-American preachers.

On September 1, 1842, in return for the sum of $650, Mercy Ann and her husband, Romulus Riggs, granted to William Evans, on behalf of the African Baptist Church, the annual ground rent for the church lot (Alexandria Deed Book C-3:230). (Evans name appears on the list in *Alexandria Gazette*.) The 1843 tax assessment shows the annual rent as being "extinct." Three years later (1846), Evans granted the ground rent for the lot "upon which the African Baptist Church is located" to Beverly Yeates, William Weaver and James Webster. The indenture further

states that this lot was to remain in trust for the "use, benefit and behalf" of the congregation of the African Baptist Church of Alexandria, a member of the Columbia Baptist Association. Also included in this document are the tenets subscribed to by the Church (Alexandria Deed Book G-3:325) (Appendix A).

The new trustees of the church appear in the 1840 and 1850 Census as free African-Americans. In 1850, Beverly Yeates was 71 years old and no longer working. Included in his household are Cassey Yeates (64 years old), Amanda Smith (27 years) and her three young daughters, Lucy A. Bell (42 years), James Irwin (29 years), and Sidney Brooks (21 years). William Weaver was a 47 year old laborer. His household included Letty Weaver aged 51, Charles Weaver aged 11, Hannah Weaver aged 9 and William Hines aged 29. James Webster and his family cannot be identified at this time because there are three James Websters listed in the records, a shopkeeper, a laborer and a carpenter (Virginia Census Records 1850).

The church was not listed in the tax assessments from 1851-60. However, a notice in the August 23, 1855 Alexandria Gazette stated that the earlier church had been replaced by a new brick structure;

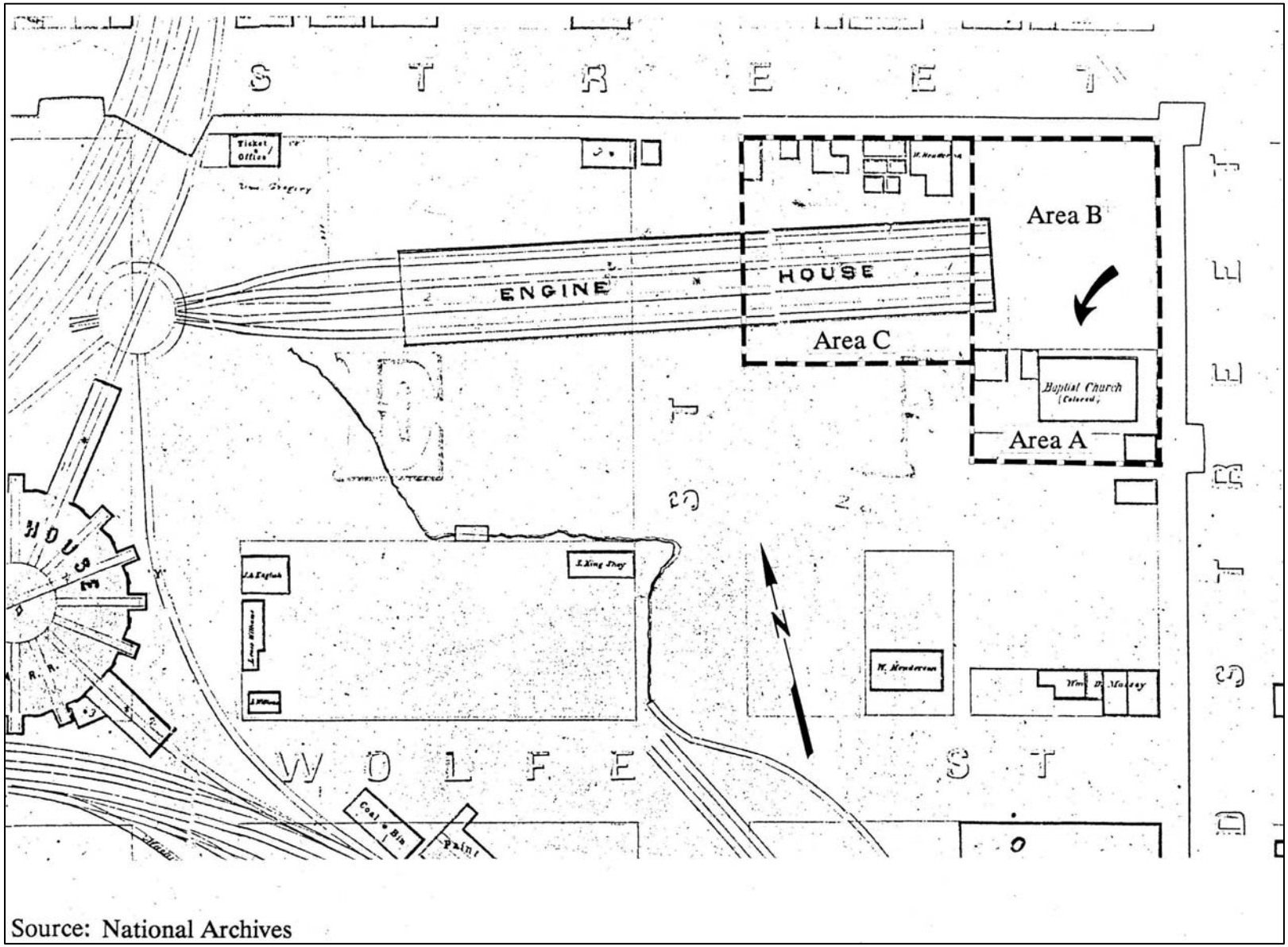
> NEW CHURCH - The colored people belonging to the Baptist Church in this city, have had erected a handsome, and commodious Brick Church on the site of the old church on Alfred Street, and it is expected that religious services will be held in it on Sunday next. The congregation deserve great credit as they will have, by their own expectations succeeded in this work.

In 1861, the church property was valued at $200 (Alexandria Land Books and Personal Property Tax Assessments). The 1865 map of the Military Railroad shows the Church (Figure 4).

The lot (25 x 110 feet) immediately to the south of the church was purchased by the trustees in October 1919 from Thomas Chauncey and his wife Frances (Alexandria Deed Book 69:111). A structure dating from before 1877 still stood on the lot in 1912, but had been demolished by 1921 (Figures 5, 6, 7, and 8).

This lot had originally been rented to William Beckley (Buckley) by James Lawrason and his wife in December 1818 for a yearly sum of $25 due on August 28th (Alexandria Deed Book G-2:158). Beckley was also a free African-American man. It is interesting to note that a William Beckley had been baptized and admitted to membership in October 1817 to the Second Presbyterian church in Alexandria (Blomberg 1988:79).

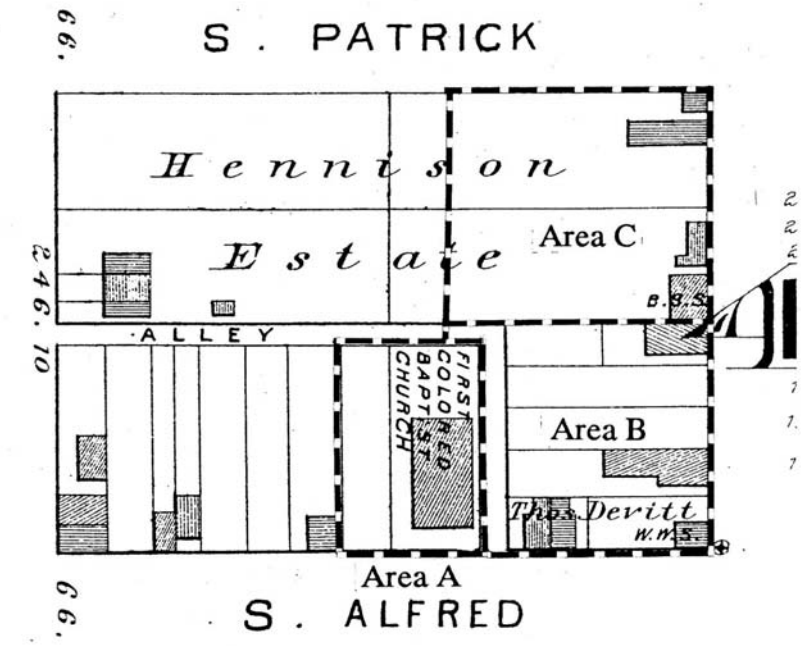
According to Lawrason's will, the property was devised to his daughter, Polly Levering (Alexandria Will Books, Orphans Court 3:133) (Figure 3). The Leverings continued renting the property to the Beckleys. The tax assessments for 1817 show that William Beckley's lot was worth $500 and that there was a one story building on it. In 1820, Archibald Beckley was listed after William. Archibald's property was valued at $100. It is possible that he lived on a portion of William's lot. The following year, Archibald's land was rented to a tenant named Nat Wilson who lived in a one story building. It appears that both William and Archibald died by 1825. The



Source: National Archives

Alfred Street
Baptist Church

Figure 4. Map of U.S. Military Railroad Station, Alexandria, VA, 1865

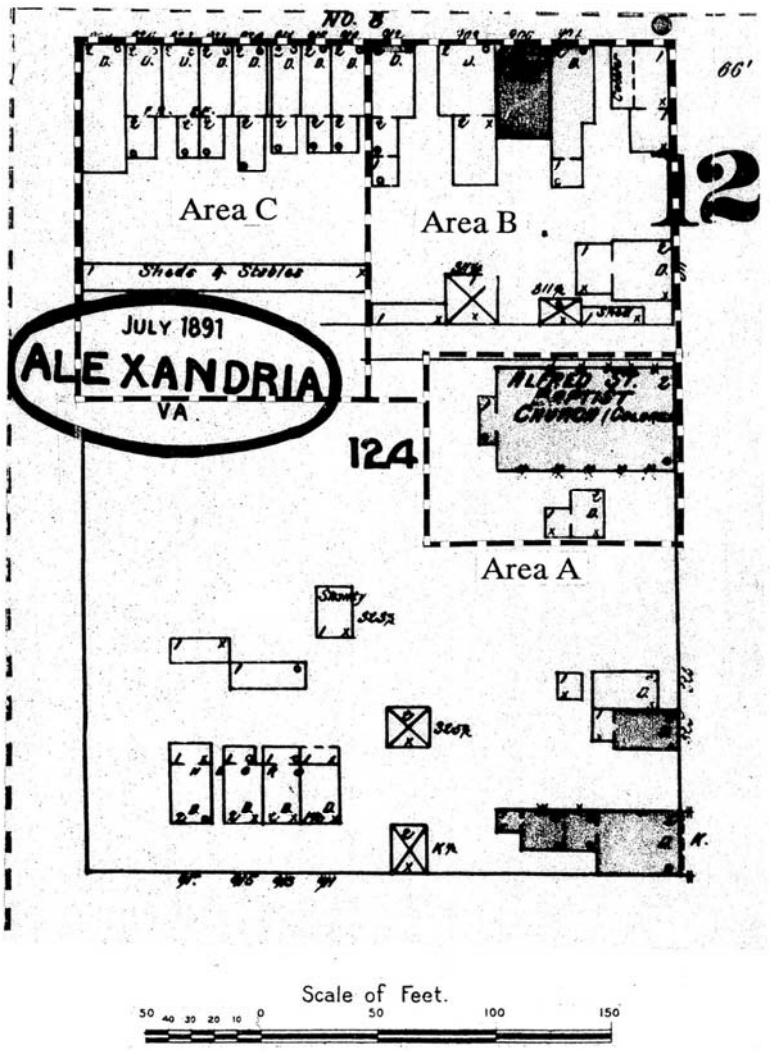


Source: G.M. Hopkins

Scale: 100': 1"

Alfred Street Baptist Church

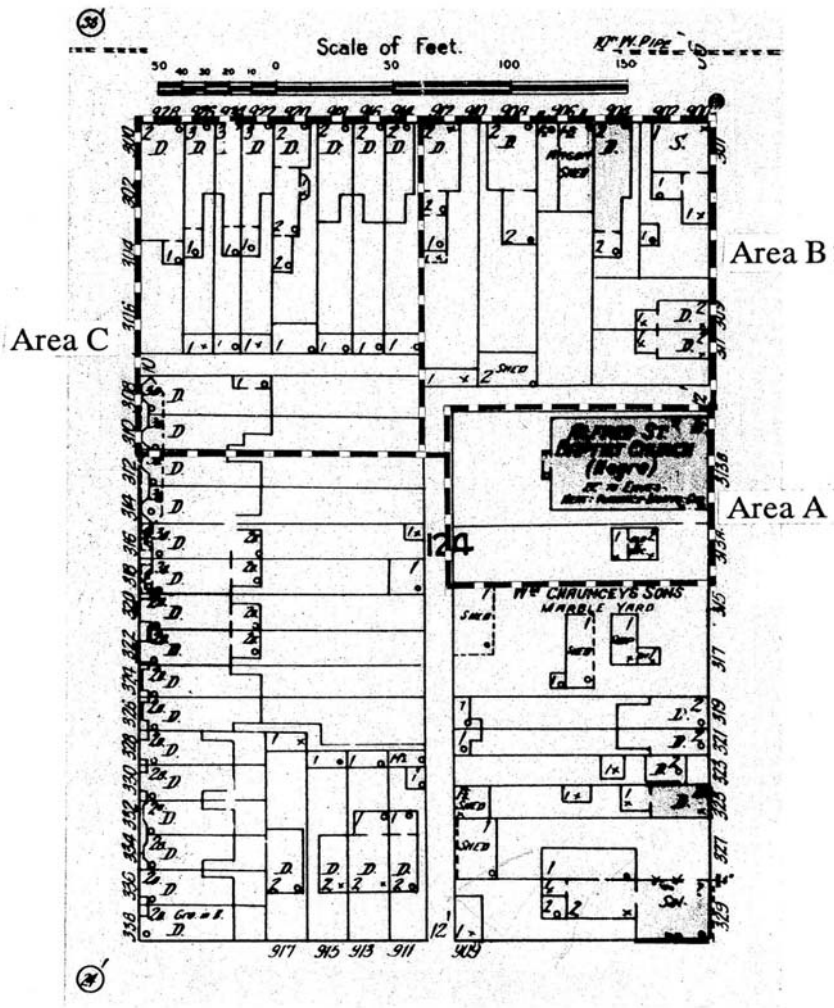
Figure 5. Project Area in 1877



Source: Sanborn Map Co.

Alfred Street Baptist Church

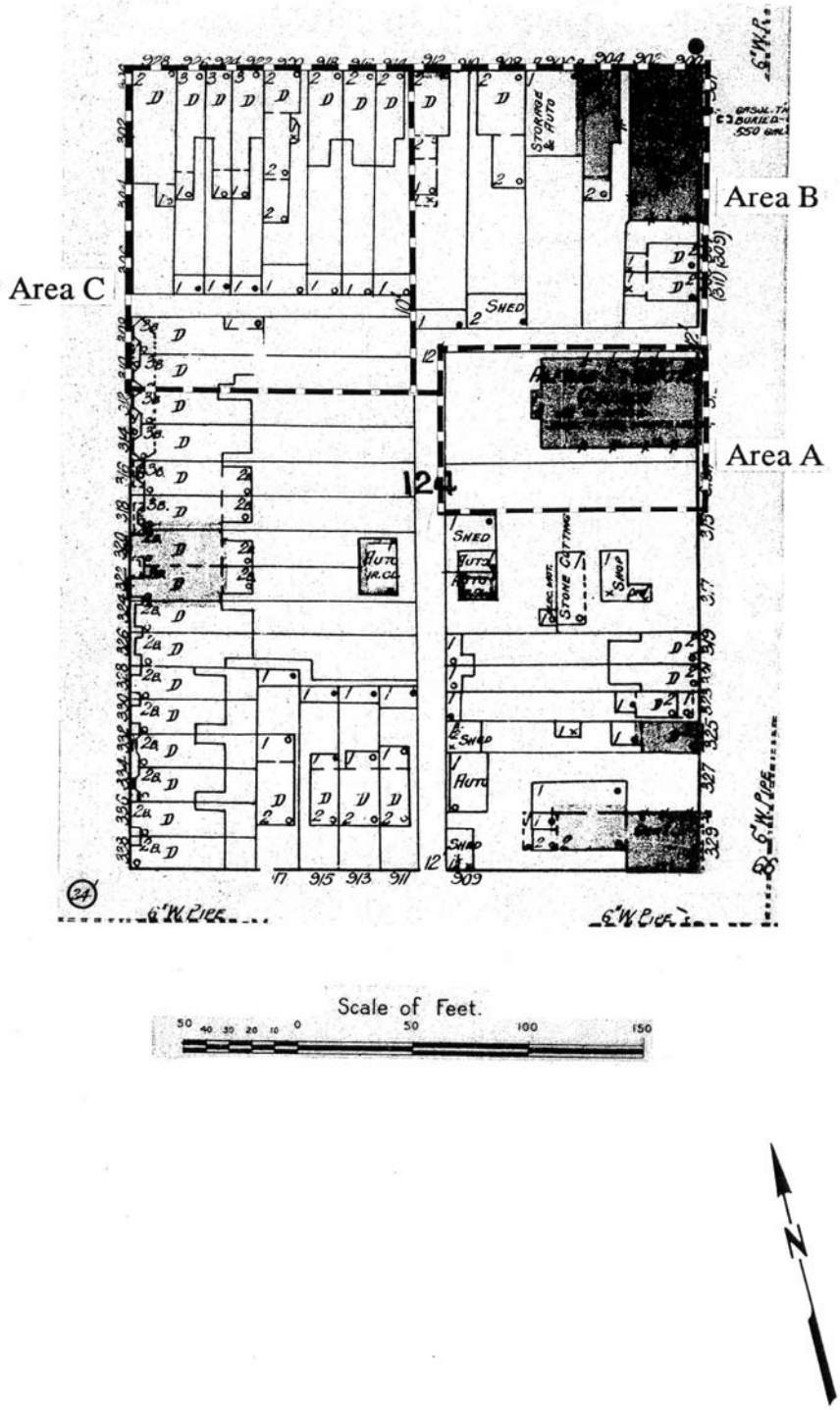
Figure 6. Project Area in 1891



Source: Sanborn Map Co.

Alfred Street Baptist Church

Figure 7. Project Area in 1912



Source: Sanborn Map Co.

Alfred Street Baptist Church

Figure 8. Project Area in 1921

assessments for this year list Archibald's "widow" and in parenthesis by William's name is the word "omitted".

During the subsequent years, several different Beckleys were recorded in the assessments and the value of the property slowly declined. In 1841, William Beckley (perhaps a son), listed as a pauper, resided on the property which was valued at $200. He paid an annual ground rent to Aaron Levering. The same notation is found in the following year, where the house and lot are assigned to Elizabeth Beckley and the valued at $150.

The Leverings maintained ownership of this lot until July 1883 when they sold it to Charles H. Seales (Alexandria Deed Book 23:450). Seales died intestate and the property was transferred to his widow, Amanda, by dower right in July 1897 (Alexandria Deed Book 39:232). In 1912, the Seales family conveyed the lot to Thomas and William Chauncey, partners trading as William Chauncey Sons (Alexandria Deed Book 62:177). The Chaunceys sold this lot to the trustees of the Alfred Street Baptist Church, W. A. Prince, Walter Butler, John McKenney, Milton Franklin, Frederick H. Rich, and William Lee, in October 1919 (Alexandria Deed Book 69:111).

a. Construction History

By 1836, a meeting house had been constructed on the Alfred Street Baptist Church property. Little is known about the 1836 structure. By 1855, the earlier structure had been replaced by a new church building. The main block of the historic church survives from the "handsome" and "commodious" new brick church documented in the 1855 Alexandria Gazette article. This main block measures approximately 40 wide x 60 feet deep. It was constructed with molded brick laid in common bond. Original windows on the sides were detailed with flat arches. The roof pitch was shallow, suggesting a Classical Revival (perhaps Greek Revival) style on a facade for which no historic photographs have been found.

The dimensions of the church clearly changed by 1891, when the Sanborn insurance map depicts the church with its facade 10 feet closer to Alfred Street and with an addition to the rear. Vertical seams along the sides indicate that a new front (eastern) vestibule/facade was added by 1891. The "Building History" indicates that construction to enlarge the church was conducted between 1881 and 1884 (Robert J. Nash et al. 1991). The style of the current facade is a rather unornamented version of Romanesque Revival, a style popular on civic, religious, and domestic architecture in Alexandria during the last quarter of the 19th-century. The rear addition extended from the middle of the back wall.

The curved, segmental arches of the windows in the facade and two front doors contrast with the rigid flatness of the upper row of windows along the sides. The lower row of windows on either side exhibit the same style of segmental windows, suggesting that the lower windows were later additions. Other architectural evidence also suggests that a lower level was added. Seams in the exterior brick around lower level windows indicate that the lower level windows were not original but added (there are no structural seams around upper level windows). In addition, a few wood joist ends (most have been replaced by bricks) survive in the side walls at a level intersecting lower level windows, suggesting that at some point, most likely when the floor was raised to its

present location, the original floor was taken out. A lower level, lighted by newly created windows, was added ca. 1897 when the basement was excavated (Robert J. Nash et al. 1991).

2. Study Area B

Study Area B or the northeastern portion of the block was also included in Lawrason's 1795 purchase. The 1820 plat included in his will illustrates that the five lots in this portion of the square fronted on Duke Street (Figure 3). These lots were to be inherited by James Lawrason, Jr., Polly Levering, Alice Lawrason, Ann Levering and Mercy Lawrason. A codicil to Lawrason's will made on May 19, 1823, granted the lot previously assigned to James Lawrason, Jr., to Lawrason's daughter, Mary Ann Riggs, because James Jr. has died (Alexandria Will Books, Orphans Court 3:136).

According to the tax assessments for 1802-1850 and the 1865 map of the Military Railroad, this property was not developed during the early 19th century. By 1877, there are several buildings in this area (Figure 5). The lot at the corner of Duke and Alfred Streets was occupied by Thomas Devitt, a grocer (Alexandria City Directory 1870). After Devitt's death in 1887, part of his property was sold to Harvey Peck in 1889 and the remainder was sold in 1919 to the Southern Aid Society (Alexandria Deed Books 22:192; 69:6). The Southern Aid Society sold the two lots to R. R. Gillingham in 1927. The deed described the house at #311 S. Alfred Street as a "double tenement" (Alexandria Deed Book 89:535). In 1937, this house lot was sold to Jacob and Mollie Shapiro (Alexandria Deed Book 138:90). Both lots were in the possession of Clarence Kern and Henry Salus, Trustee, when it was sold to the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA) in 1974 (Alexandria Deed Book 791:448).

The lots at #904-912 Duke Street had structures fronting Duke Street and the alley by 1891. In 1976, following the Circuit Court Case 514-A, ARHA vs Martin L. Adem et ux, these four lots were sold to the ARHA for $315,000 (Alexandria Deed Book 817:385).

On September 14, 1979, the trustees for the Alfred Street Baptist Church, purchased for $99,000 all the lots on the northern portion of the block from the ARHA (Alexandria Deed Book 963:385). This property came from a larger parcel known as #5A in the DIP Urban Renewal Project.

3. Study Area C

Study Area C or the northwestern portion of the block was sold (rented) by Benjamin Shreve to Robert Young before 1816. Young served as a Brigadier General in the District of Columbia Militia during the War of 1812. His home, built in 1812 on Duke Street, became the Alexandria Slave Pen ca. 1830 (Artemel et al. 1987). Young sold the property on Duke Street to Thomas Swann in 1816-17. The tax assessments of 1802 - 1850 record this as a vacant lot.

By 1865, this property belonged to W. Henderson. There were a number of structures fronting on Duke Street at this time. In addition, a portion of the engine house from the U. S. Military Railroad extended onto the property. The 1877 Hopkins Map records this property as the Hennison Estate (probably Henderson) and shows several buildings fronting on Duke Street. By

1882, John W. Henderson was appointed as special commissioner in the suit of equity between John W. Henderson and his wife versus E.H. Gregory and his wife. The special commissioner was appointed to sell the property. The four lots that became #920-926 Duke Street, for example, were sold to J.T. Nalls on June 17, 1882 (Alexandria Deed Book 12:79). Ownership of these lots changed often during the early and mid-20th century. The lots that became #914-918 Duke Street were sold to Joseph E. Chauncey on June 4, 1882 (Alexandria Deed Book 11:440). These lots remained in the Chauncey family until 1946 when they were purchased by Ruth C. Cragg (Alexandria Deed Book 237:43).

By 1891, almost all the lots on the northern portion of the square had homes fronting on Duke Street. To the rear of these homes was a long one story structure labeled "sheds and stables" (Figure 6).

The owners of the lots in Study Area C at the time they were purchased by the ARHA between 1972-76 were: #914-918 Duke Street, W. and R. Reynolds (Alexandria Deed Book 245:91); #920 Duke Street, P. and P. Shapiro (Alexandria Deed Book 758:201); #922 Duke Street, Ruffner (Alexandria Deed Book 776:361;364); #924 Duke Street, M. J. Oliver (Alexandria Deed Book 773:438); #928 Duke Street, M. G. Kelly (Alexandria Deed Book 772:708); and #308-310 S. Patrick Street, Gerber (Alexandria Deed Book 742:182).

On September 14, 1979, the trustees for the Alfred Street Baptist Church, purchased for $99,000 all the lots on the northern portion of the block from the ARHA (Alexandria Deed Book 963:385). This property came from a larger parcel known as #5A in the DIP Urban Renewal Project.

D. Summary

The entire project area was originally part of a 700-acre patent granted to Margaret Brent in November 1662. The first recorded development within the project area was the construction of the first Alfred Street Baptist church in 1818. Study areas B and C appear not to have been developed until the mid to late nineteenth century. These two study areas were primarily occupied by residential buildings and associated structures.

The project area is located within one of the earliest known free African-American working and middle class neighborhoods, referred to as "The Bottoms." This neighborhood was located outside of the central commercial and political core of the city. By being thus removed from the dominant white society, the African-Americans in this neighborhood were able to develop their own self-sufficient community. The Alfred Street Baptist Church played an important role within the community by providing a social, educational and economic center. This community has grown and persisted to the present day.